

PRE CLASSIC

Best bet
Prefontaine Classic
(tape delay)
11:00 a.m. Sunday, NBC

Friday, May 23, 2003

The big box of Pre

Tasty morsel no. 1

Think women's pole vault and the name Stacy Dragila immediately comes to mind. She holds the world and American records at 15-9 1/4, as well as the Hayward Field and Prefontaine records at 15-5 3/4. But Dragila could be challenged on Saturday by Russian Svetlana Feofanova, who will make her first ever appearance on American soil. Feofanova is the indoor world record holder and recently beat Dragila at the World Indoor Championships.

Morsel no. 2

Keep an eye on the men's 110 hurdles event. The Hayward Field and Prefontaine record holders at 13.12 seconds, Larry Wade and Mark Crear, return. As if that wasn't enough, former Duck Micah Harris will line up against current freshman Eric Mitchum.

Trivia bowl

Gail Devers is the American, Hayward Field and Prefontaine record holder in the 100 hurdles, her fastest time (12.33) coming in 2000. What time did she run at last year's Prefontaine?

Morsel no. 3

In what could be a repeat of last year's terrific performance, Kevin Toth and John Godina return to the shot put ring. Toth is the Prefontaine record holder after throwing 72-9 3/4 last year, and Godina took third in the same event.

Quotable

"Overall, the women are stronger than the men and it has never been that way." — meet director Tom Jordan.
"The Prefontaine meet is the only place in the U.S. where you can see that kind of punchup." — Track and Field News' statistician Dan Lilot on the women's 400 meters.

Morsel no. 4

As usual, the entrants in this year's list are a "who's-who" of track and field competitors. But it will also be about who won't be there. Seven-time winner Marion Jones will not return, the same going for distance star Marla Runyan. Tim Montgomery initially entered, but pulled out on Wednesday, and Hicham El Guerrouj will fail to compete in Eugene for the first time since 2000.

Trivia answer

Devers ran the 100 hurdles in 12.29. However, it didn't count because the wind reading was 2.7 — 0.7 more than allowable. Still, it was the fastest time in history under any conditions.

Classic is a women's meet in 2003

A star-studded women's field should be the main event at Saturday's Prefontaine Classic

Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

Eleven minutes and 30 seconds after 2 p.m. Saturday, all eyes will be on the northeast corner of Hayward field.

That's 90 seconds after the start of the women's 800 meters, and the northeast corner is where the athletes will begin the final haul to see who can out-kick who in this year's star-studded field.

Mozambique's Maria Mutola has 10 straight victories in the Prefontaine Classic meet, more than any other athlete, understandable considering Track and Field magazine has ranked her No. 1 in the world the last five years and eight times total.

"I'm sure she'll break two minutes, which is always a world-class time," meet Director Tom Jordan said. "I want to see someone challenging her in the home stretch."

Jearl Miles Clark, World Champion at the 400 meters, would love that opportunity. At age 36, Miles Clark has bounced around between the two distances. She has 14 world rankings in both along with the national record in the 800 of 1:56.40.

Last year, Miles Clark focused on the one-lap event, and Track & Field News ranked her third in the world. In other thirds, there is only one name holding the top three fastest 800 times ever run by an American — Jearl Miles Clark.

American Regina Jacobs is worthy of a shot to cross the tape first after recording the first ever sub-four-minute indoor 1,500 meter race in February. Less than a month later, Jacobs earned the gold at that distance in the World Indoor Championships.

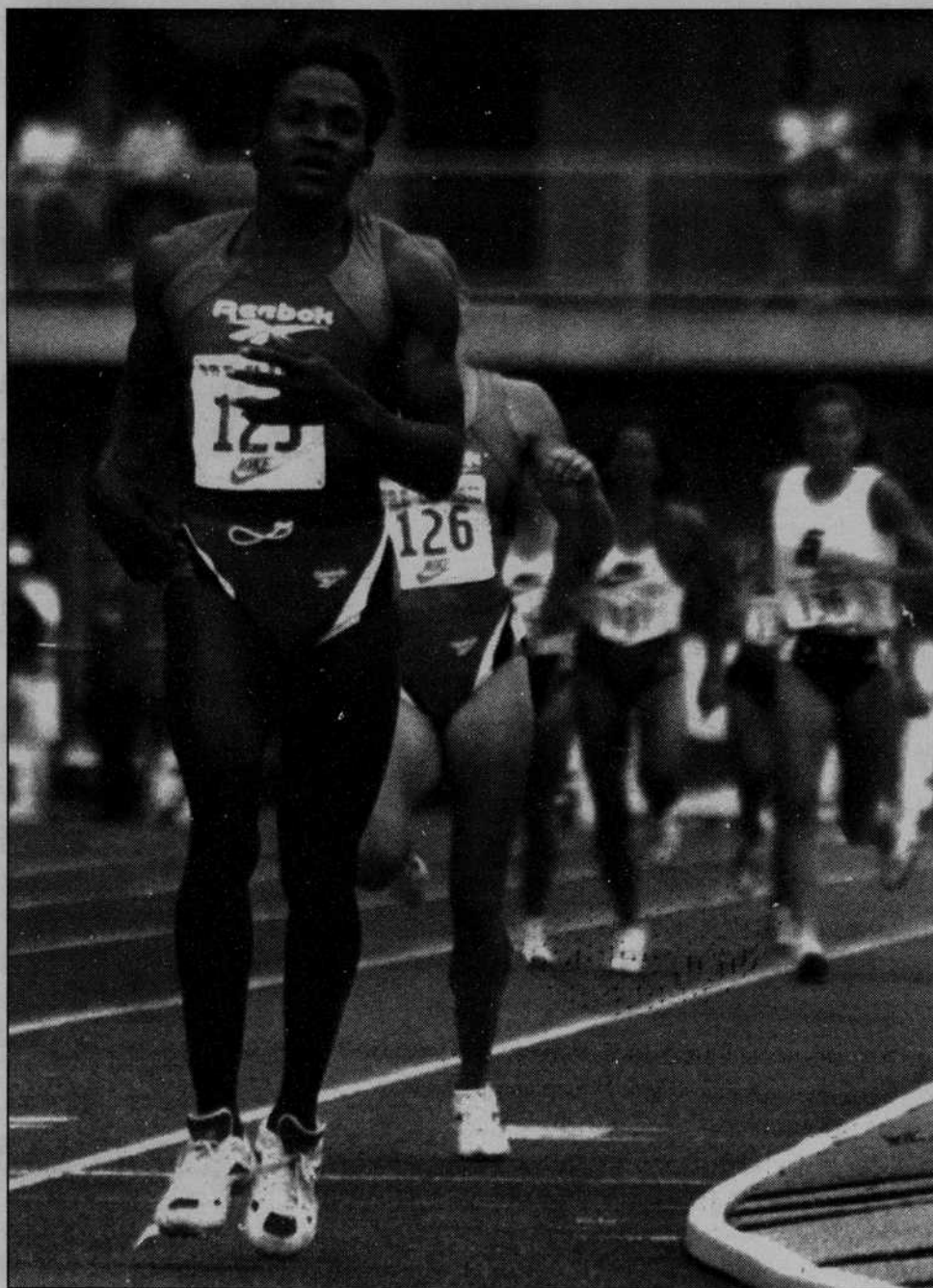
Jacobs' list of accomplishments goes on to include being the American recordholder at 1,000 meters and a No. 1 ranking in the U.S. in the 800 meters as recently as 2001.

In other action, Suzy Favor Hamilton will return to Hayward Field after missing last year's competition for a friend's wedding. She will run the 1,500 meters, leaving the infamous Favor Hamilton-Jacobs battle for another year.

Favor Hamilton, a former Eugene native, was ranked fourth in the world last year by Track and Field News and has moved up to No. 3 on the IAAF World Rankings list for 2003.

"We're happy to have her," Jordan said. "She's always been a crowd favorite. Hopefully, she'll be up front, fighting for the win."

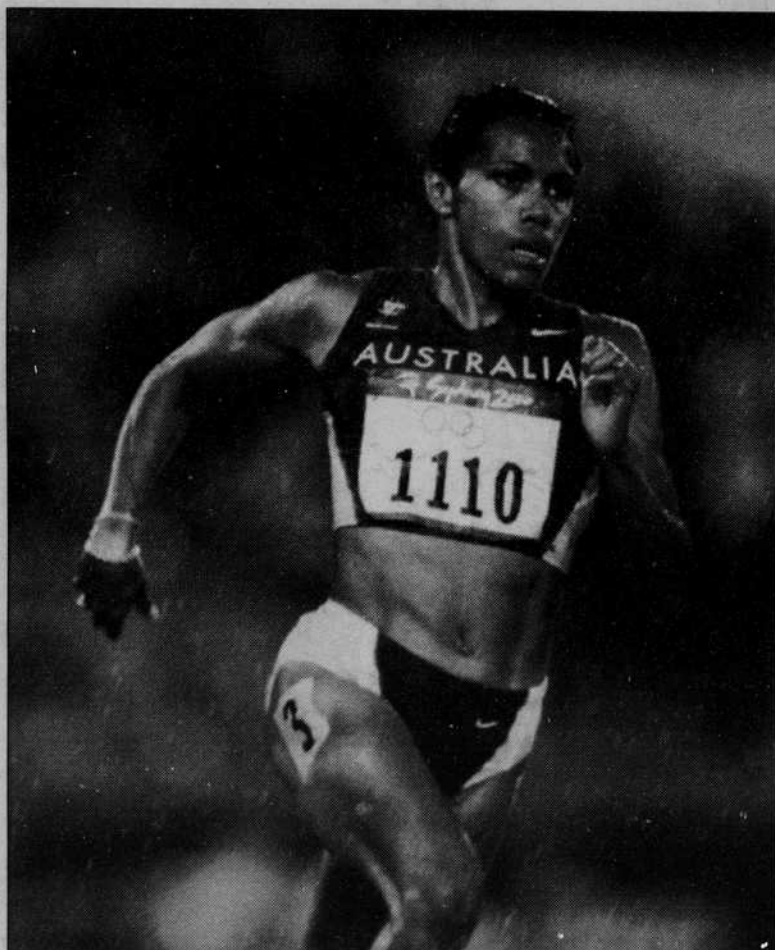
Yet the 1,500 could be far from an easy American win as world indoor 800-meter recordholder Jolanda Ceplak, from Slovenia, holds the 1,500 meter record of



Emerald

Maria Mutola, formerly a Eugene resident, has participated in the Pre for years. She won this race in 1995.

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All Cathy Freeman photos courtesy Victah@Photo Run

Cathy Freeman won the 400 meters at the 1998 Prefontaine with a time of 50.02.

Australian for 'fast'

Cathy Freeman has gone from phenom to legend since the last time she ran at the Prefontaine Classic

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

She's the Australian equivalent of Michael Jordan.

Cathy Freeman, the gold medal winner in the 400 meters at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, is as much a star in her homeland as Jordan has been to basketball fans for the last two decades.

Freeman is ready to strut her stuff at the 29th annual Prefontaine Classic, as she returns to the meet for the first time since 1998.

Freeman has a piece of history on her side. She was the first Aboriginal athlete to represent Australia at the Olympics.

"It doesn't take much for me to be reminded of how I affect people," she told the San Francisco Chronicle earlier this month. "When I think about the connections I make with people, it causes me to be emotional — I'm definitely proud of who I am and where I'm from. I represent different things to people. It's the inter-

pretations you take away that mean the most. I'm definitely proud to be an Australian."

Freeman, 30, is well-known in Australia, especially after bringing 112,000 fans to their feet as she outraced the world in the 2000 Olympics. Just before that, she had been seen as the lucky soul that got to light the Olympic torch, seen by tens of millions of viewers across the globe.

On her best days, Freeman has been clocked in the 400 at 48.63 seconds, despite standing just 5-foot-4. She is often described as being all legs, a valuable and necessary tool for sprinters to have.

Now, though, she is vulnerable. Freeman lost to Jana Pittman on March 21, ending a nearly five-year span when Freeman won every 400 meter race she participated in.

Pittman finished at 50.43. Freeman wasn't far away, but wasn't that close either. She was done in 51.81.

"Suddenly I found myself thinking: 'Oh God, maybe I should retire,'" she wrote in her column in the Daily Telegraph shortly after the loss. "I had all these extreme

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